




**INCIDENTS AT SEA:  
SHIPJACKING, MARITIME  
MUGGINGS, THEFTS AND  
ILLEGAL MIGRATION IN  
SOUTHEAST ASIA**

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# OVERVIEW



•Over the past few years, the popular press has played up the issue of “piracy cases” in Southeast Asian waters, particularly, Strait of Malacca.

•However, difficult to document specific cases of piracy as defined by UNCLOS. Most states therefore classify “piracy” cases as sea robberies/ maritime thefts.

**1. Disaggregating number of incidents, using the sub-categories used by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) (for the sake of consistency).**



# Area:-

- Indonesia
- Malaysia
- The Malacca Strait
- The Singapore Strait
- The South China Sea


- **Data from the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement and Coordination Centre (MECC) used to provide a comparative picture of the situation in Malaysian waters. :**



A scenic view of a beach with clear turquoise water and a bright blue sky. The water is shallow and clear, showing the sandy bottom. The sky is a deep blue with some light clouds. The beach is a mix of light and dark sand.

- **Maritime muggings in Southeast Asia concentrated in Indonesian water - 69% of all incidents.**

- **Number of cases in Malacca Strait did not exceed three a year until 2000. 75 cases were reported.**

A scenic view of a beach with turquoise water and a blue sky. The water is clear and shallow, showing the sandy bottom. The sky is a deep blue with some light clouds. The beach is a mix of light and dark sand.

•MECC statistics showed a more gradual trend in the Malacca Strait. This tends to support the hypothesis that maritime thefts and robberies increased as a result of the post-1997 Indonesian political and economic crisis.

• Actual robberies only accounted for 19% of all reported incidents.



**•Thefts and attempted thefts, at 43%, made up the bulk of all incidents.**

**•Conclusion, maritime robberies and thefts are concerned. The situation far less serious than the popular press has made it.**



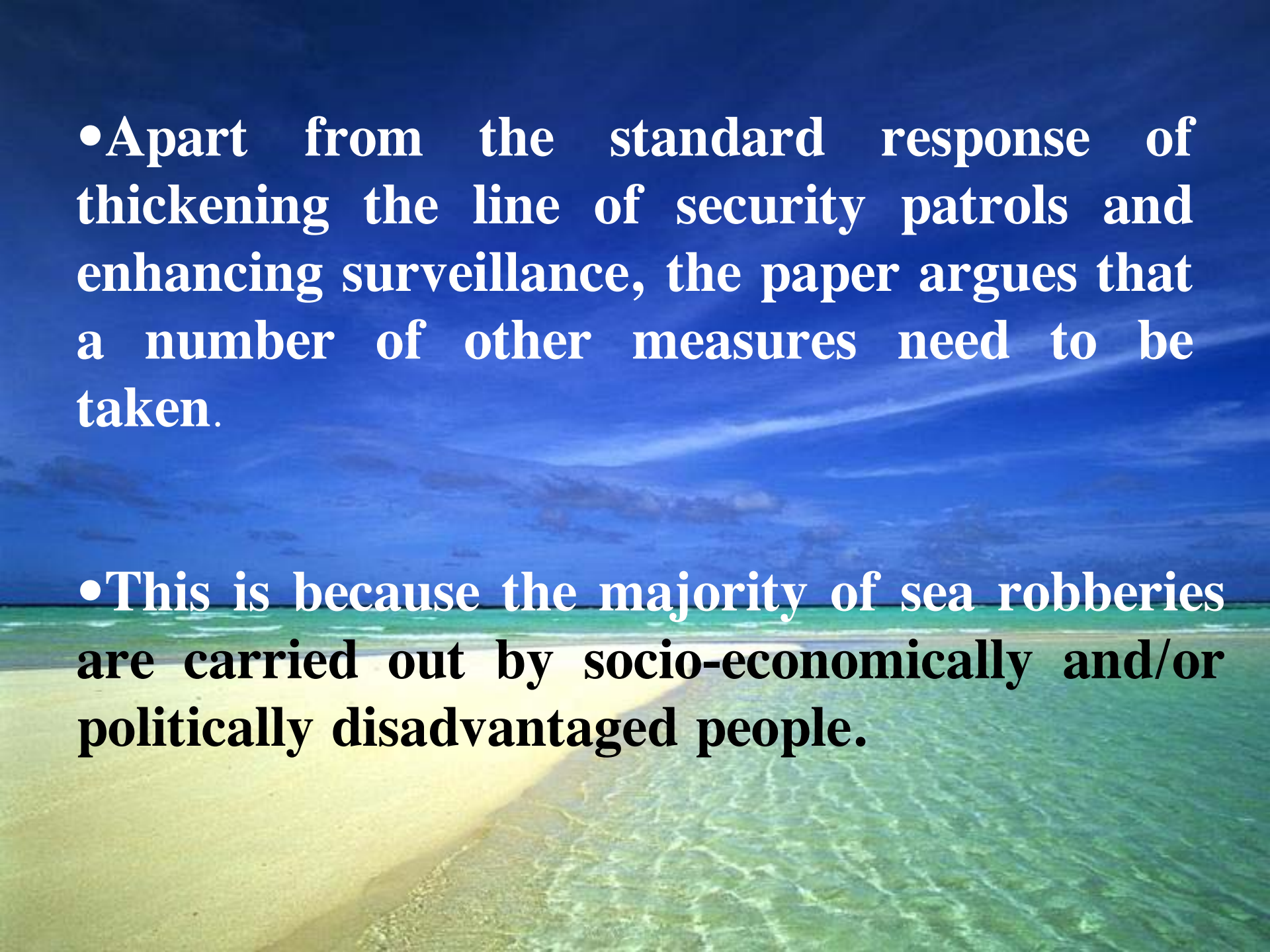
## 2. Malaysia Response

- Malaysian response has centred on enhanced patrols, improved surveillance, and beefing up overall security in the Malacca Strait and west Sabah.
- Malaysia has also acquired a significant number of fast strike craft and patrol craft specifically to deal with sea robbers. As a result of the *Abu Sayaf* kidnappings of foreign tourists and Malaysians in 2000, combating sea robberies and illegal migration has become a top security priority for Malaysia.

### 3. Causes: Loss of governance?

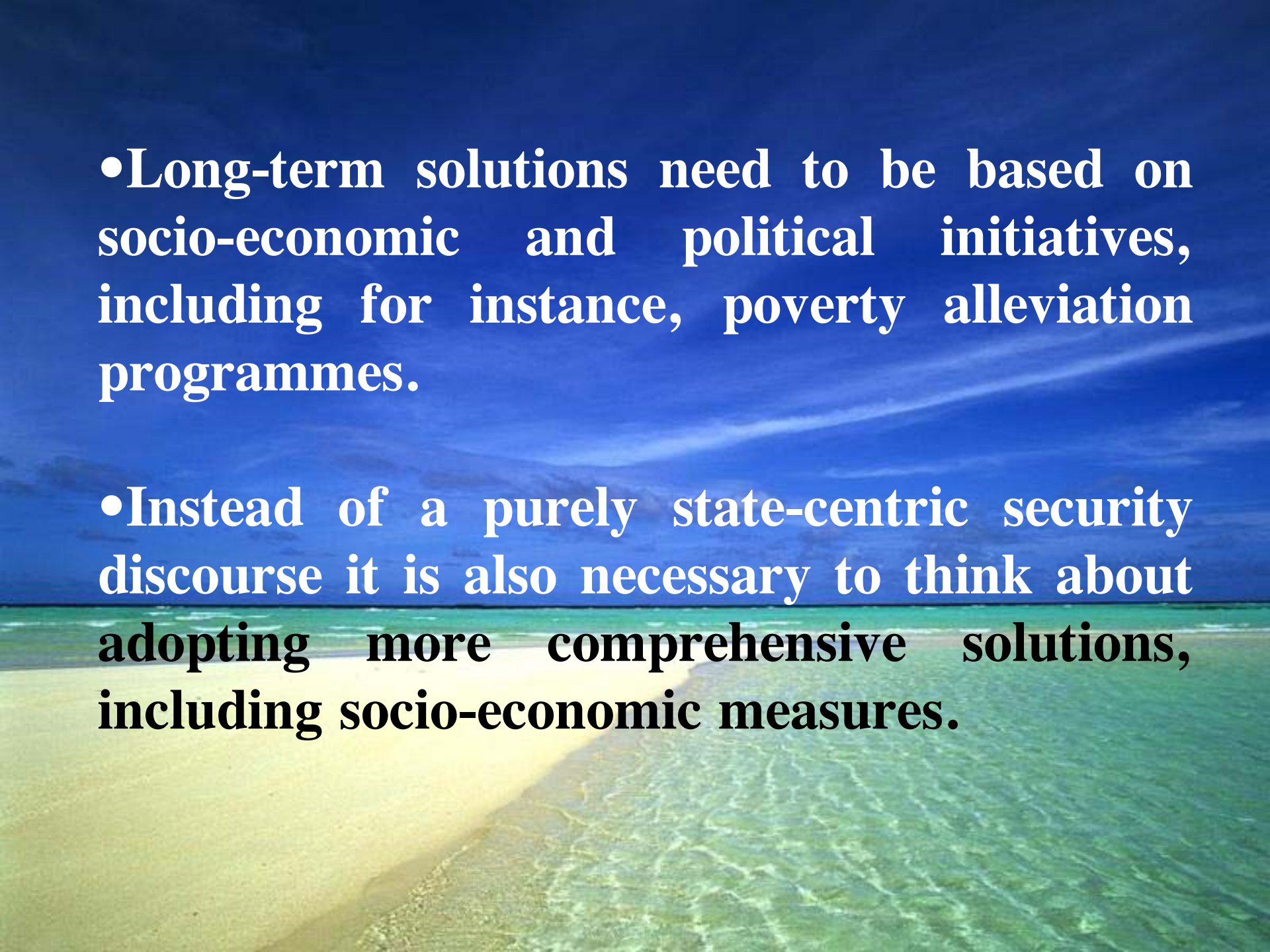
The loss of governance in the Southern Philippines and Indonesia, precipitated by the 1997 financial crisis, is probably one key reason for the increase in the number of incidents over the past few years.

- In this respect, the problem of sea robberies in Southeast Asia cannot be delinked from that of illegal migration. They are two sides of the same coin. In most instances, the mega drivers behind the phenomena are similar.



• Apart from the standard response of thickening the line of security patrols and enhancing surveillance, the paper argues that a number of other measures need to be taken.

• This is because the majority of sea robberies are carried out by socio-economically and/or politically disadvantaged people.



• Long-term solutions need to be based on socio-economic and political initiatives, including for instance, poverty alleviation programmes.

• Instead of a purely state-centric security discourse it is also necessary to think about adopting more comprehensive solutions, including socio-economic measures.

# WHAT, WHERE AND WHOM

- Shipjacking
- Straightforward thefts and sea robberies
- Heavily-armed and dangerous robbers off the western seaboard of the Sabah coast.

# SHIPJACKING

- Without doubt the most serious type of maritime crime encountered in the region
- Shipjacking is a highly organized multi-national and multi-million dollar crime. In one sense, it is an “insider job”, since officials of port authorities or shipping companies are often involved, helping to target specific, arranging for ports of diversion, and facilitating the re-registration of hijacked vessels.

**For example:**

**Year:**

**2002**

**2001 MT Selayang: Tirta Niaga**

**2000 Alondra Rainbow**

**1998 MV Cheng Sun**

**1996 Samudra Samrat**

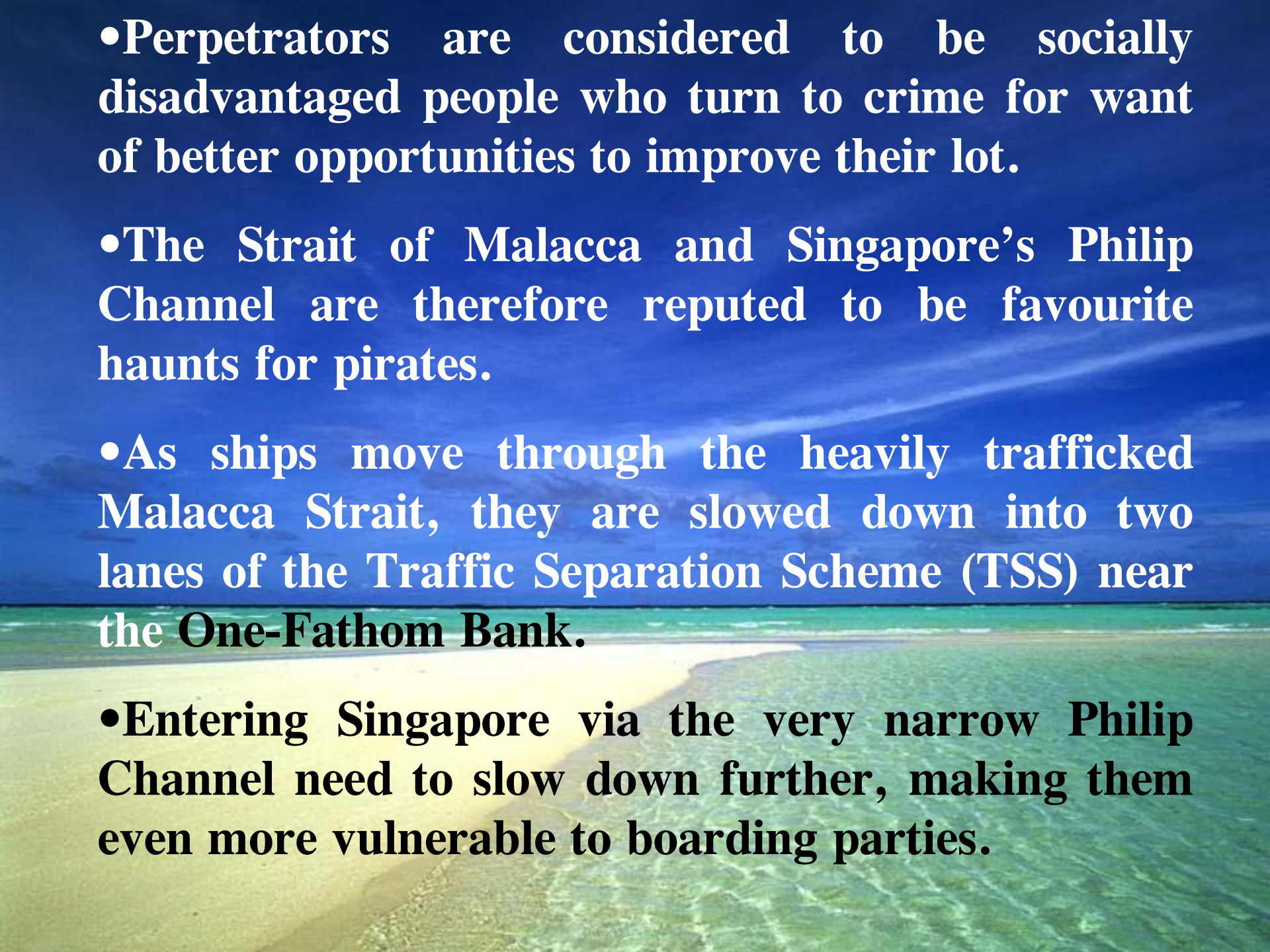
**1995 Anna Sierra; Hye Mieko**





# MALACCA STRAIT SEA ROBBERIES

- Sea robberies and thefts from ships of the Malacca Strait -- Singapore Straits variety, most common form of crime encountered by commercial seafarers in the waters of Peninsular Malaysia.
- Sea robbers wait for their victims, usually laden tankers or freighters with low freeboards, in constricted waters where the vessels have to slow down.
- Who are the perpetrators? They are Indonesian communities living along the coast of east Sumatra, and the islanders of the Riau archipelago south of the strait.



•Perpetrators are considered to be socially disadvantaged people who turn to crime for want of better opportunities to improve their lot.

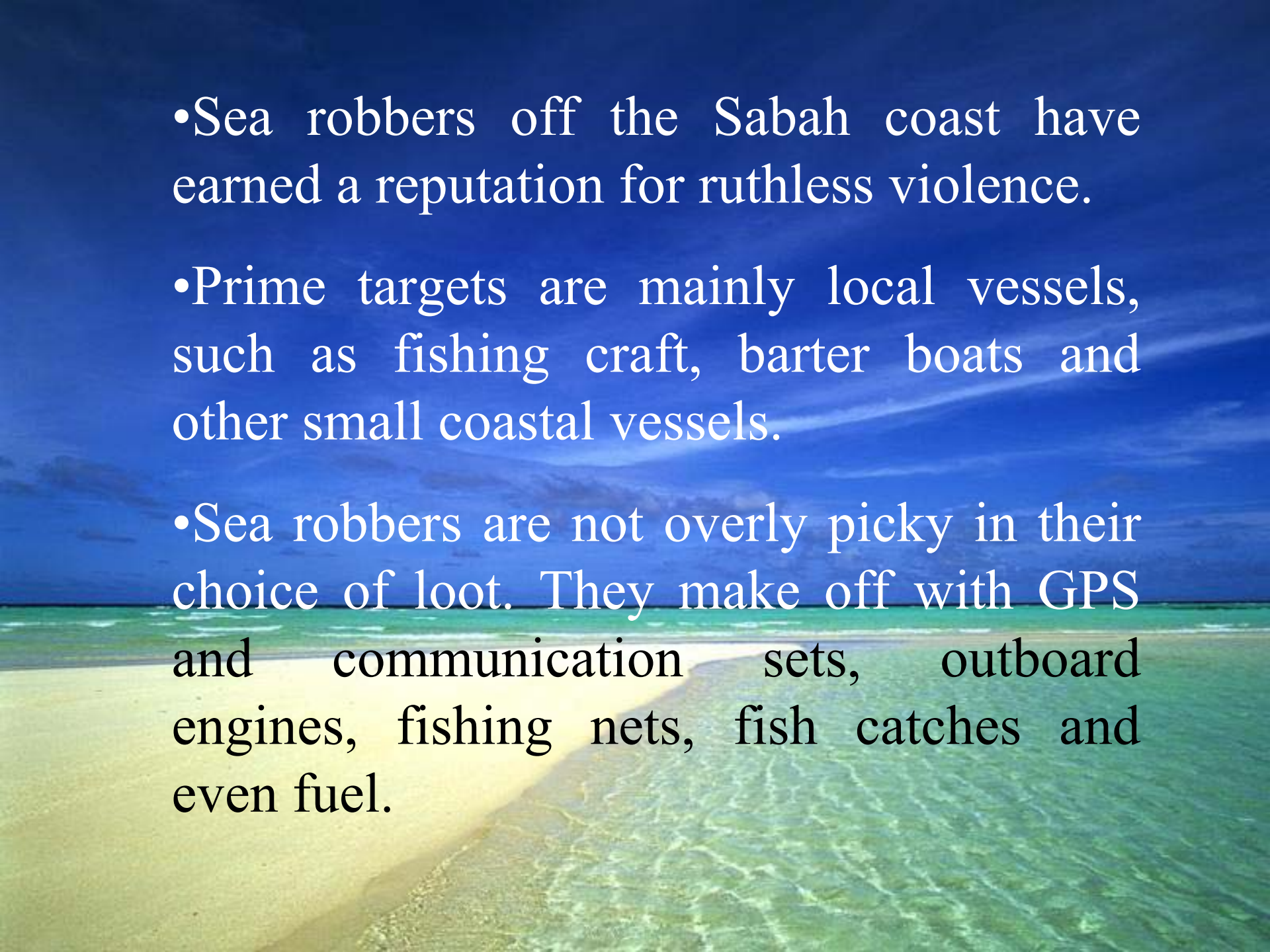
•The Strait of Malacca and Singapore's Philip Channel are therefore reputed to be favourite haunts for pirates.

•As ships move through the heavily trafficked Malacca Strait, they are slowed down into two lanes of the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) near the **One-Fathom Bank**.

•**Entering Singapore via the very narrow Philip Channel need to slow down further, making them even more vulnerable to boarding parties.**

# **SABAH SEA ROBBERIES AND THE POLITICS OF VIOLENCE**

- ❖ **Sea robberies used to be more prevalent along the eastern seaboard of Sabah than anywhere else in Malaysia up until the infamous kidnappings of Malaysians and foreign tourists from two islands resorts – Sipandan and Pandanan – in 2000.**
- ❖ **This region is one where the proliferation smallarms has become a serious problem. Indeed, of not only are sea robbers well armed, but even barter traders carry arms for self-protection.**

- 
- Sea robbers off the Sabah coast have earned a reputation for ruthless violence.
  - Prime targets are mainly local vessels, such as fishing craft, barter boats and other small coastal vessels.
  - Sea robbers are not overly picky in their choice of loot. They make off with GPS and communication sets, outboard engines, fishing nets, fish catches and even fuel.

## **Enforcement in both the Malacca Strait and Sabah is:**

**1. Physical environment with numerous islands providing ready refuge for sea robbers.**

**2. Short sea distances dividing the Malaysia – Indonesia and the Malaysia – Philippine maritime borders, which make eluding pursuers relatively easy.**

**3. ASEAN preoccupation with the concept of non-interference which precludes hot pursuit by Malaysian enforcement agencies.**

**4. Finally, the jealously guarded notion of the sanctity of state sovereignty, which makes it very difficult even for allies with treaty commitments to intervene militarily within the domestic affairs of an ASEAN state.**

# THE NUMBERS GAME: “THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF LIES – LIES, DAMNED LIES AND STATISTICS” - (DISRAELI)

•The IMB’s detailed reports, which was first provided in 1995, breaks down its “piracy incidents” into seven major categories:

1. Robbery.
2. Attempted robbery.
3. Theft.
4. Attempted theft.
5. Hijack.
6. Boardings (no further information).
7. Attempted boardings.

•The point to note is that we are not talking huge numbers here, but just 20 cases at most in a single year. The IMB figures for the Malacca Strait is extremely interesting. Contrary to popular belief, incidents in the Malacca Strait had been few and far between, until 2000, when it suddenly shot up to 75 incidents.

•The incidence of robberies is even more perplexing, with zero cases from 1995 to 1999 when it surged to 22 cases in 2000.

•Again, a breakdown of Malacca Strait incidents illustrate that the situation is actually not as serious as it has been made out to be.

•Even if we take a conservative figure of 50,000 ship movements a year for the Malacca Strait and 100 criminal attacks a year, the chances of any vessel becoming a victim of sea robbers is just 0.2%.

## **A NOTE ON REPORTING CHANNELS: Why IMB and MECC Data Differ**

**•Do the IMB and MECC statistics tell the entire story? The short answer is “no”. Apart from unreported cases, the IMB figures do not capture attacks against local craft. At the same time, its statistics do not make the distinction between state boundaries, but only sub-regions in a somewhat arbitrary manner.**

**•It does not distinguish between robberies happening on the Indonesian side of the Malacca Strait from incidents taking place in Malaysian waters.**



**•The Malaysian statistics collated by the MECC on the other hand only cover reported incidents in Malaysian waters. Obviously, many skippers of international commercial vessels do not report to the Malaysian authorities for fear of being detained for investigations.**

**•The different reporting channels employed by the IMB and Malaysia's MECC, therefore do not capture the full extent of maritime incidents, and there is obvious underreporting in both instances.**

**•Nevertheless, it is significant that while actual numbers differ, the trend lines for both the MECC and IMB coincide for the Malacca Strait and even for the South China Sea. Sabah statistics, however, differ markedly.**

•This is because, as observed earlier, Sabah sea robberies invariably involve local craft.

•From the analysis derived from both MECC and IMB data, it is obvious that the extent and seriousness of sea robberies, especially in Malaysian waters, have somehow been blown out of proportion.

# NUMBERS OF INCIDENTS BY CATEGORIES

Year	Categories	Location					Total
		Indonesia	Malacca Straits	Malaysia	Singapore Straits	South China Sea	
1995	Roberry	6		2	1	1	10
	Attempted Roberry	1					1
	Theft	12		3			15
	Attempted Theft	9	1	2		1	13
	Hijacked*			2	1		3
	Boarded (No further info)	1	1			1	3
1996	Roberry	15		1			16
	Attempted Roberry	2					2
	Theft	19		1			20
	Attempted Theft	14	3	3		1	21
	Hijacked*	2					2
	Boarded (No further info)	2				1	3
1997	Roberry	17				3	20
	Attempted Roberry	4			1		5
	Theft	14			2	1	17
	Attempted Theft	11		3	1	1	16
	Hijacked*	2		1	1	1	5
	Boarded (No further info)						0
1998	Roberry	20		6		1	27
	Attempted Roberry	3					3
	Theft	16		4			20
	Attempted Theft	4					4
	Hijacked*	3	1			3	7
	Boarded (No further info)						0
	Attempted to Board	13				1	14

<b>1999</b>	<b>Roberry</b>	<b>32</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>36</b>
	<b>Attempted Roberry</b>	<b>14</b>			<b>4</b>		<b>18</b>
	<b>Theft</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>37</b>
	<b>Attempted Theft</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>22</b>
	<b>Hijacked*</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>			<b>3</b>
	<b>Boarded (No further info)</b>	<b>2</b>					<b>2</b>
	<b>Attempted to Board</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>Roberry</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>46</b>
	<b>Attempted Roberry</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>20</b>
	<b>Theft</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>38</b>
	<b>Attempted Theft</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>40</b>
	<b>Hijacked*</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Boarded (No further info)</b>	<b>1</b>					<b>1</b>
	<b>Attempted to Board</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>Roberry</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>12</b>
	<b>Attempted Roberry</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>1</b>			<b>3</b>
	<b>Theft</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>			<b>48</b>
	<b>Attempted Theft</b>	<b>12</b>		<b>1</b>			<b>13</b>
	<b>Hijacked*</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>			<b>12</b>
	<b>Boarded (No further info)</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>14</b>
	<b>Attempted to Board</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>2002</b>	<b>Roberry</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>				<b>2</b>
	<b>Attempted Roberry</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>				<b>2</b>
	<b>Theft</b>	<b>61</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>68</b>
	<b>Attempted Theft</b>						<b>0</b>
	<b>Hijacked*</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>22</b>
	<b>Boarded (No further info)</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>			<b>17</b>
	<b>Attempted to Board</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>28</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>621</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>905</b>

Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report* (various years)

\*Ship completely taken over

**NUMBER OF INCIDENTS 1995-2002 (INDONESIA, MALACCA STRAITS, MALAYSIA SINGAPORE STRAITS AND SOUTH CHINA SEA)**

Types	Number	Percentage (%)
Robbery	169	19.7
Attempted robbery	54	6.3
Theft	263	30.65
Attempted theft	129	15.03
Hijack	57	6.64
Boardings	40	4.66
Attempted boardings	146	17.02
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>858</b>	<b>100%</b>

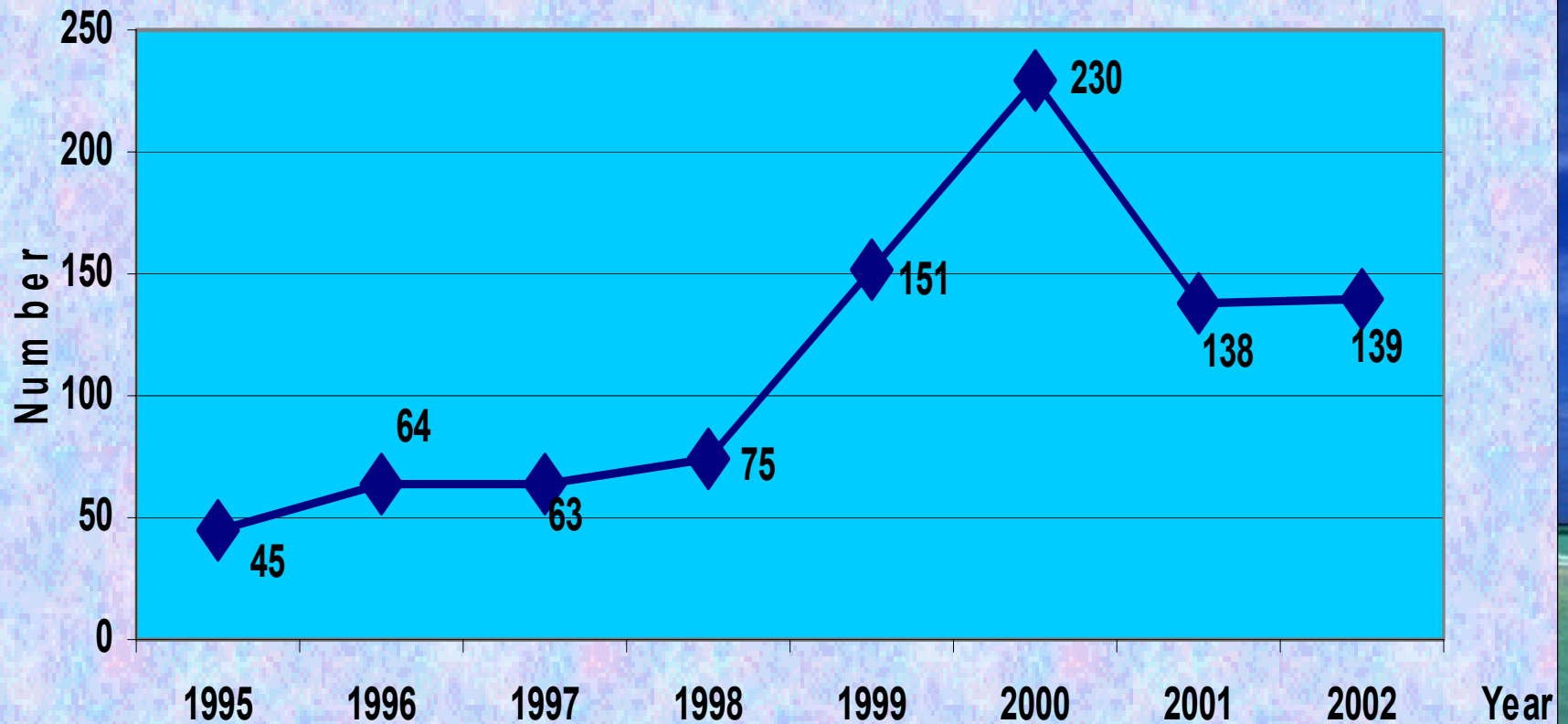
**Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report* (disaggregated data, various issues)**

**•Robberies and attempted robberies at sea constituted just about 26% of all incidents in the so-called major piracy areas of Southeast Asia.**

**•Hijacks made up almost four per cent of all incidents over the years under review, while thefts and attempted thefts accounted for the bulk of the incidents at a little over 30.65%. Boardings and attempted boardings totaled nearly 22% of the incidents.**

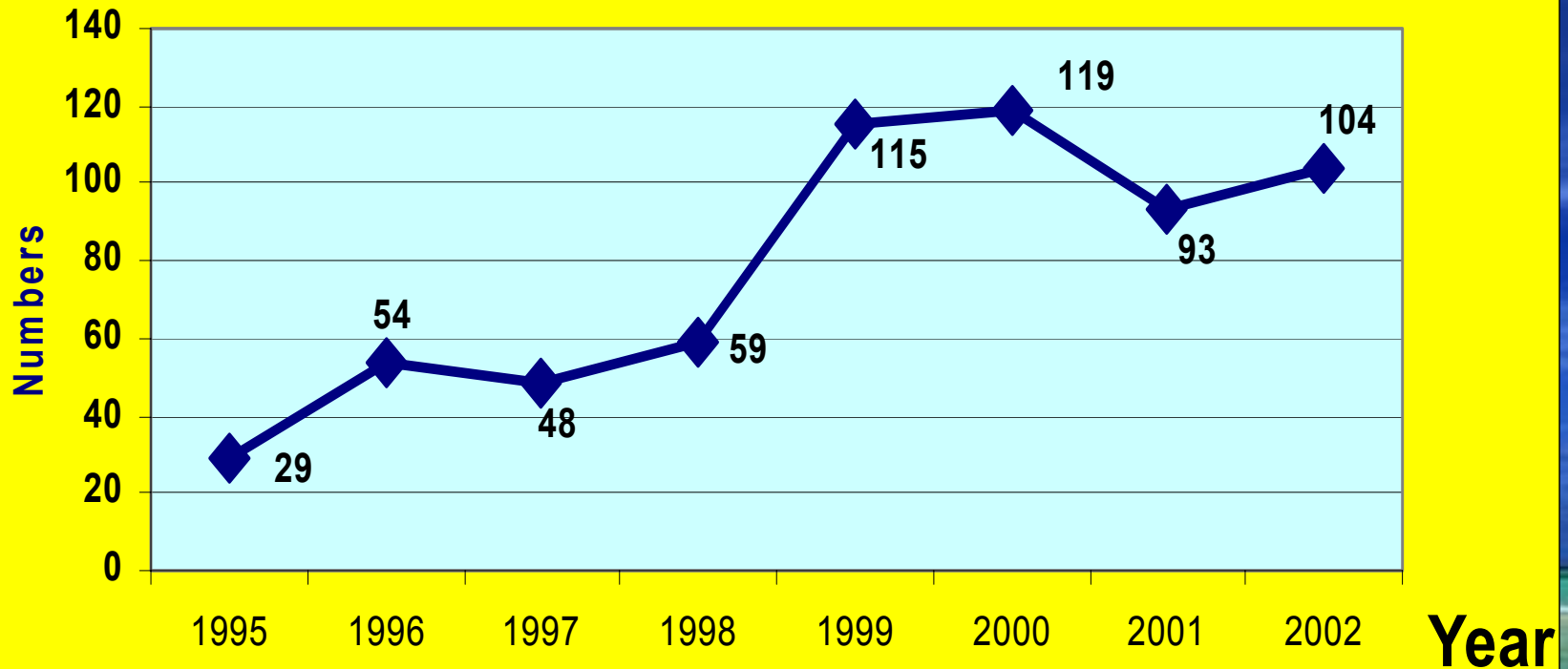
**•The most interesting fact to emerge, however, is that 621 incidents, or 68.62% occurred in Indonesian waters! The Malacca Strait accounted for only 12.92% of all incidents from 1995 to 2002, with the year 2000 alone accounting for 75 incidents, or a full 11.94%.**

## Total Number of Incidents- Indonesia, Malacca Straits, Malaysia, Singapore and South China Sea



Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report* (disaggregated data, various issues)

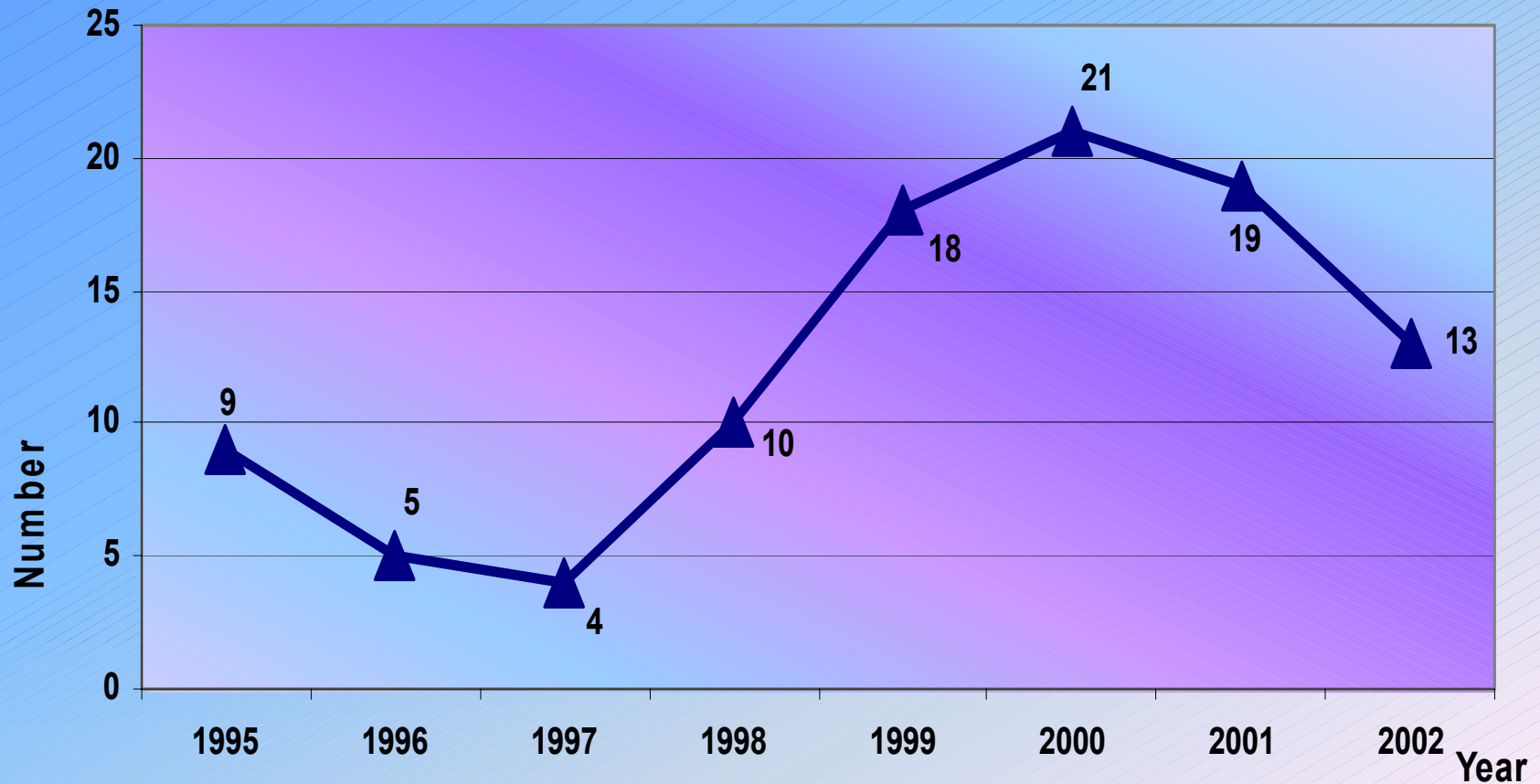
## Number of Incidents, Indonesia



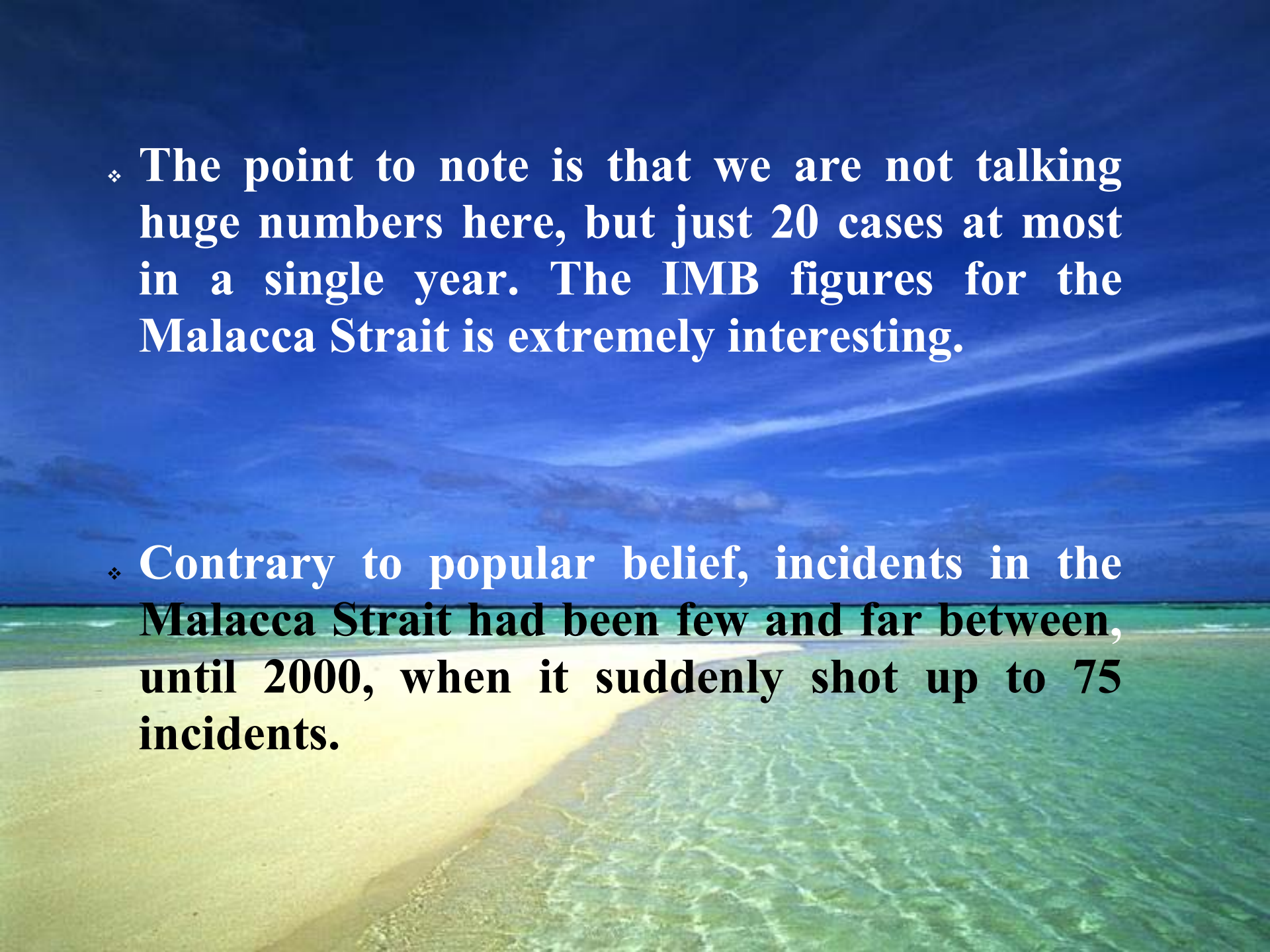
Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report* (disaggregated data, various issues)



## Number of Total Incidents, Malaysia



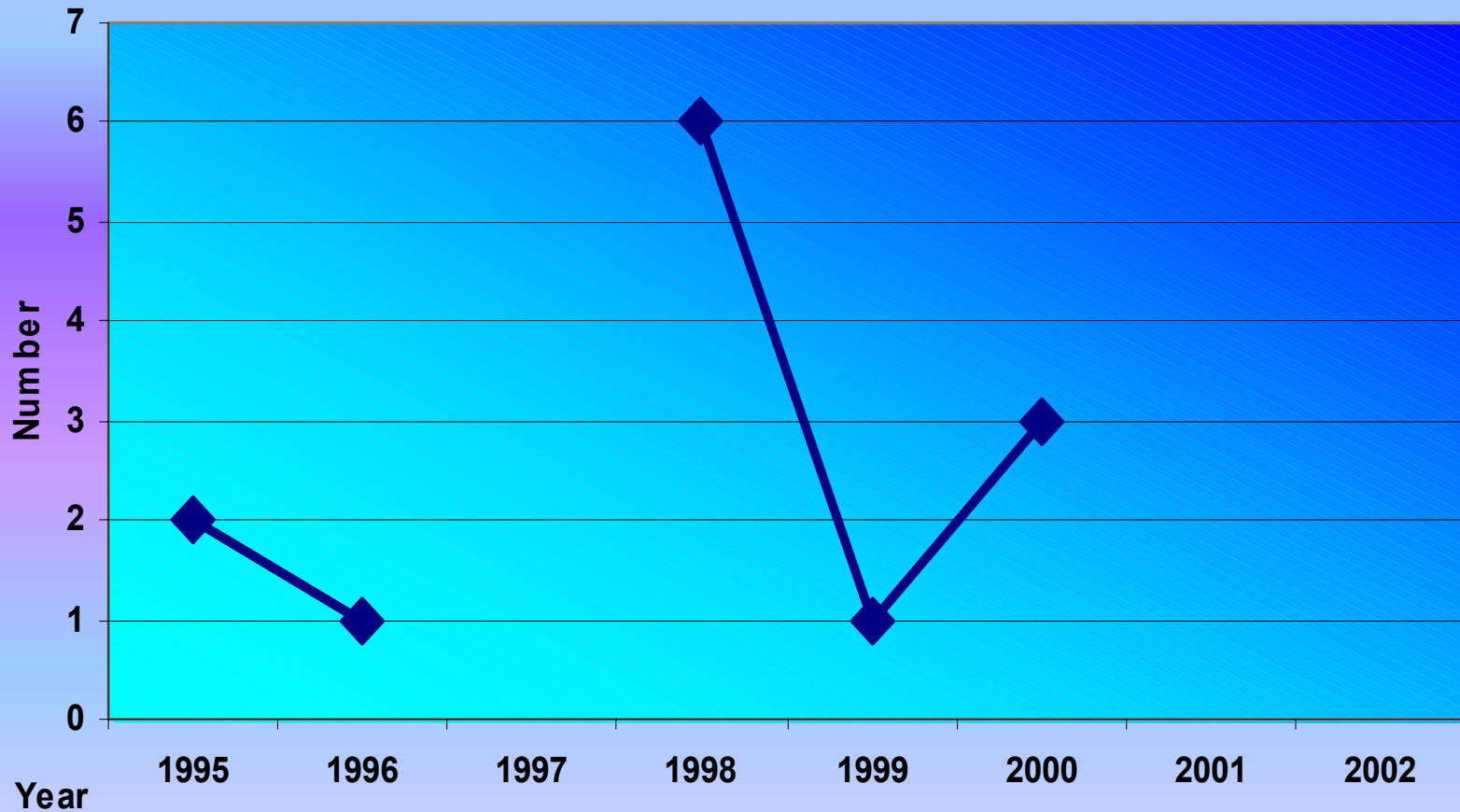
Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report* (disaggregated data, various issues)



❖ The point to note is that we are not talking huge numbers here, but just 20 cases at most in a single year. The IMB figures for the Malacca Strait is extremely interesting.

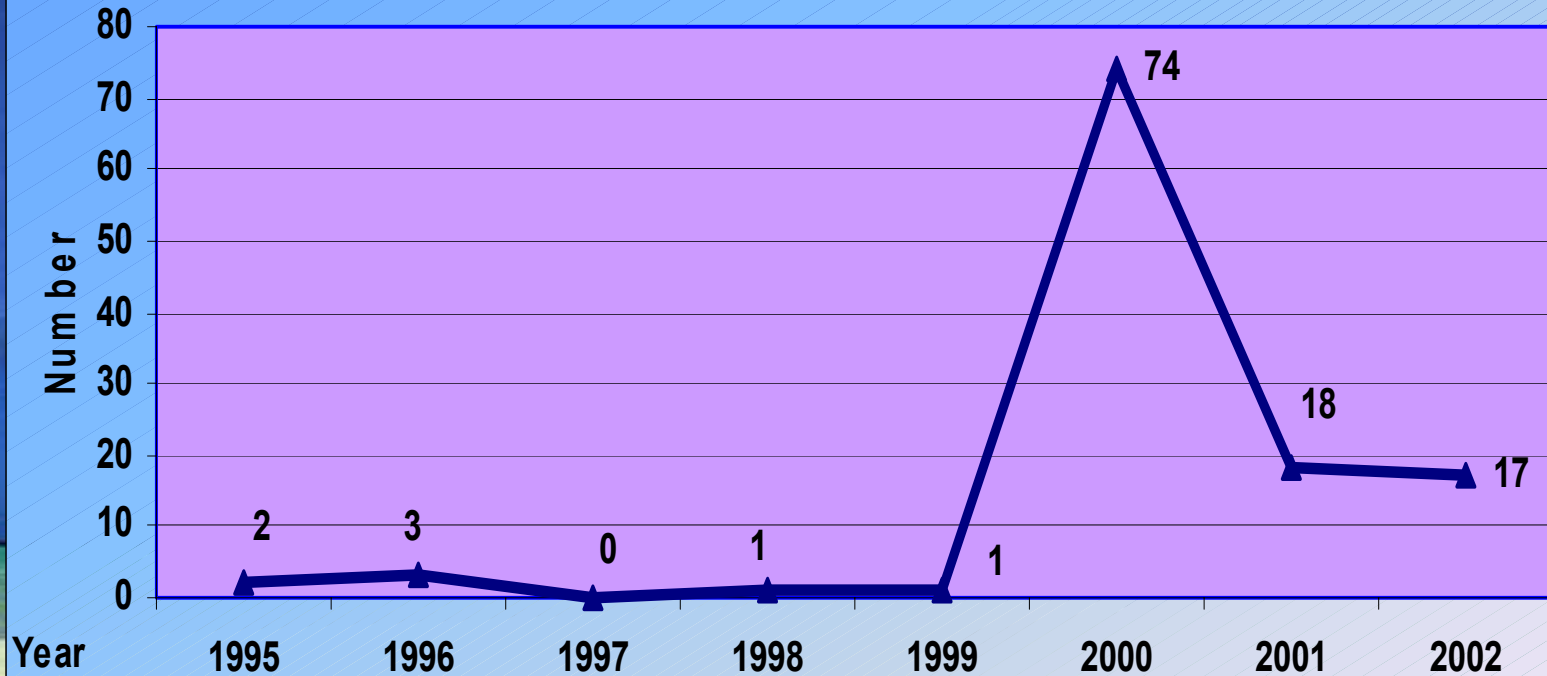
❖ **Contrary to popular belief, incidents in the Malacca Strait had been few and far between, until 2000, when it suddenly shot up to 75 incidents.**

## Number of Robbery Incidents, Malaysia



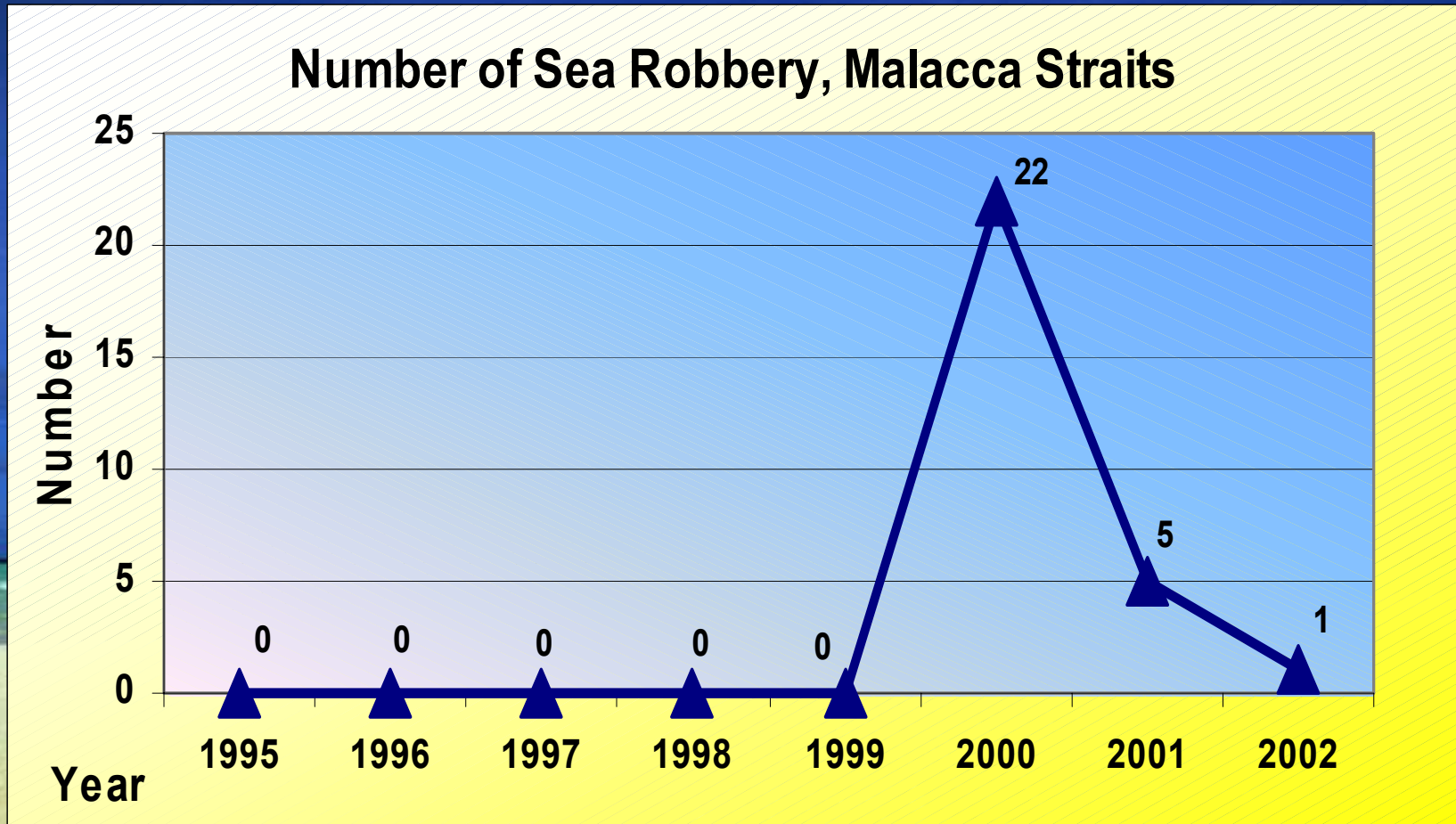
Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report* (disaggregated data, various issues)

# Number of Incidents, Malacca Straits



Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report* (disaggregated data, various issues)

•The incidence of robberies is even more perplexing, with zero cases from 1995 to 1999 when it surged to 22 cases in 2000.



Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report* (disaggregated data, various issues)

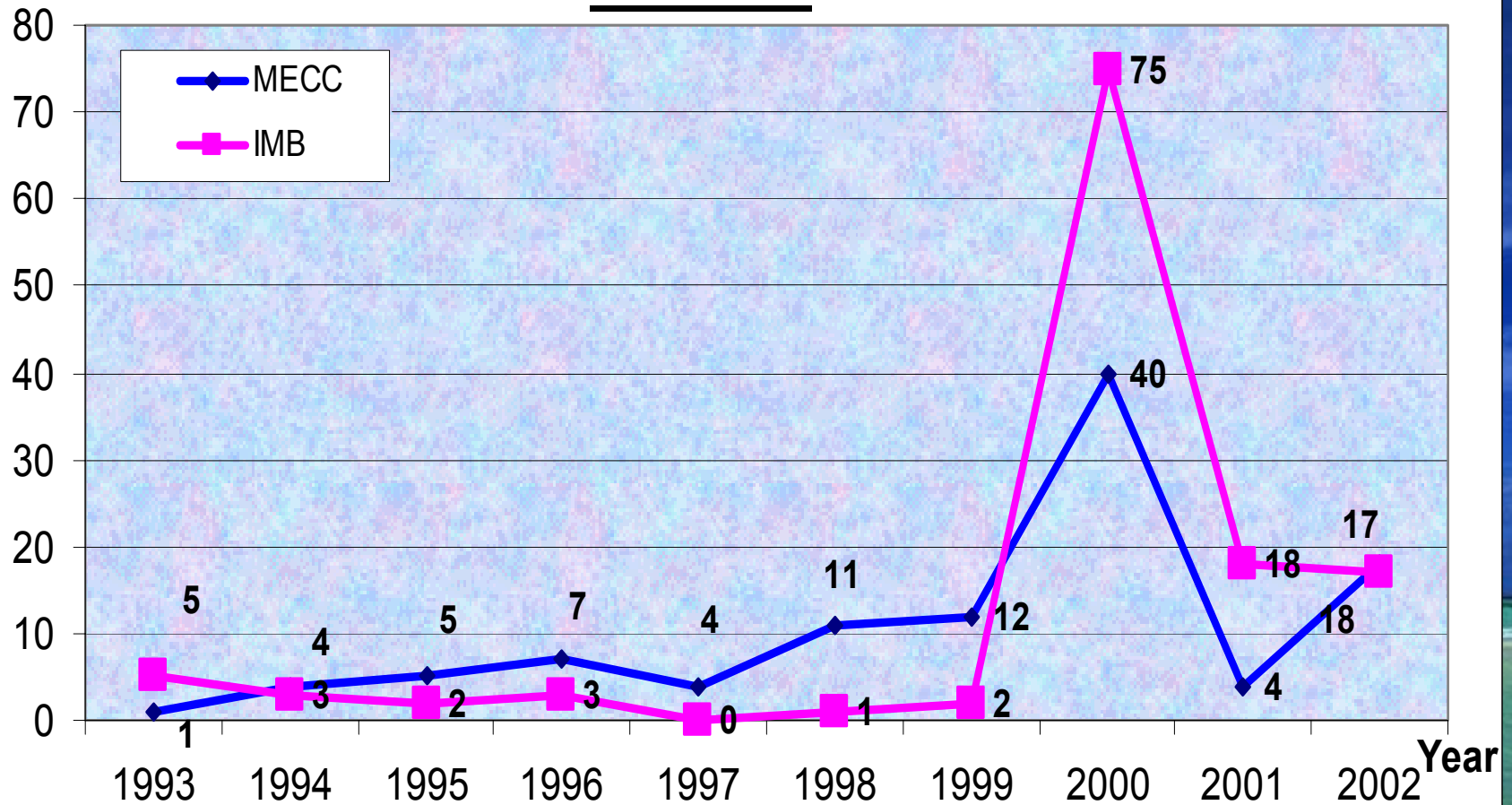
## **Comparison of IMB and MECC Data: Strait of Malacca, Malaysian Waters and South China Sea, 1993-2002**

	Straits of Malacca		South China Sea		Sabah		Sarawak		Total	
	MECC	IMB	MECC	IMB	MECC	IMB	MECC	IMB	MECC	IMB
1993	1	5	0	31	37	3	0	0	38	39
1994	4	3	0	6	34	3	0	0	38	12
1995	5	2	0	3	57	0	0	2	62	7
1996	7	3	1	2	42	0	0	0	50	5
1997	4	0	2	6	20	2	0	0	26	8
1998	11	1	3	5	17	5	1	1	32	12
1999	12	2	1	3	5	0	0	0	18	5
2000	40	75	3	10	18	9	1	4	62	98
2001	4	18	5	3	9	14	1	0	19	35
2002	18	17	3	0	9	5	0	5	30	27
Total	106	126	18	69	248	41	3	12	375	248

**Source** : Annual Report, Maritime Enforcement Co-ordination Centre, Lumut (various issues): ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report* (various issues)

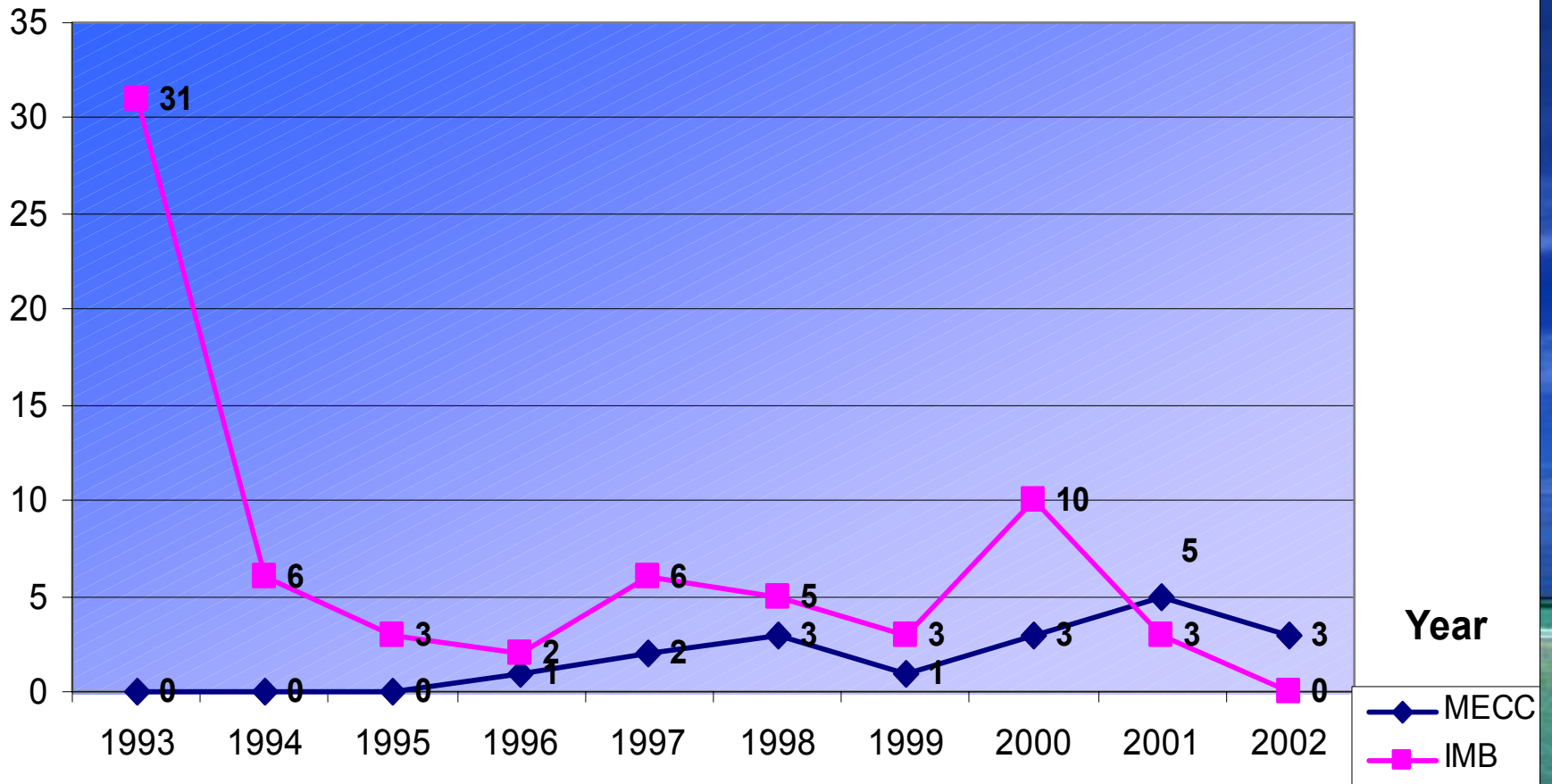
**Note** : IMB statistics from its Annual Piracy Reports sometimes differ from the consolidated statistics published in Piracy Report 2000, page 3

## Comparison of IMB and MECC Data: Strait of Malacca, 1993-2002



Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report (Various issues)  
: Annual Report, Maritime Enforcement Co-ordination Centre, Lumut (various issue)

## Comparison of IMB and MECC Data: South China Sea, 1993-2002

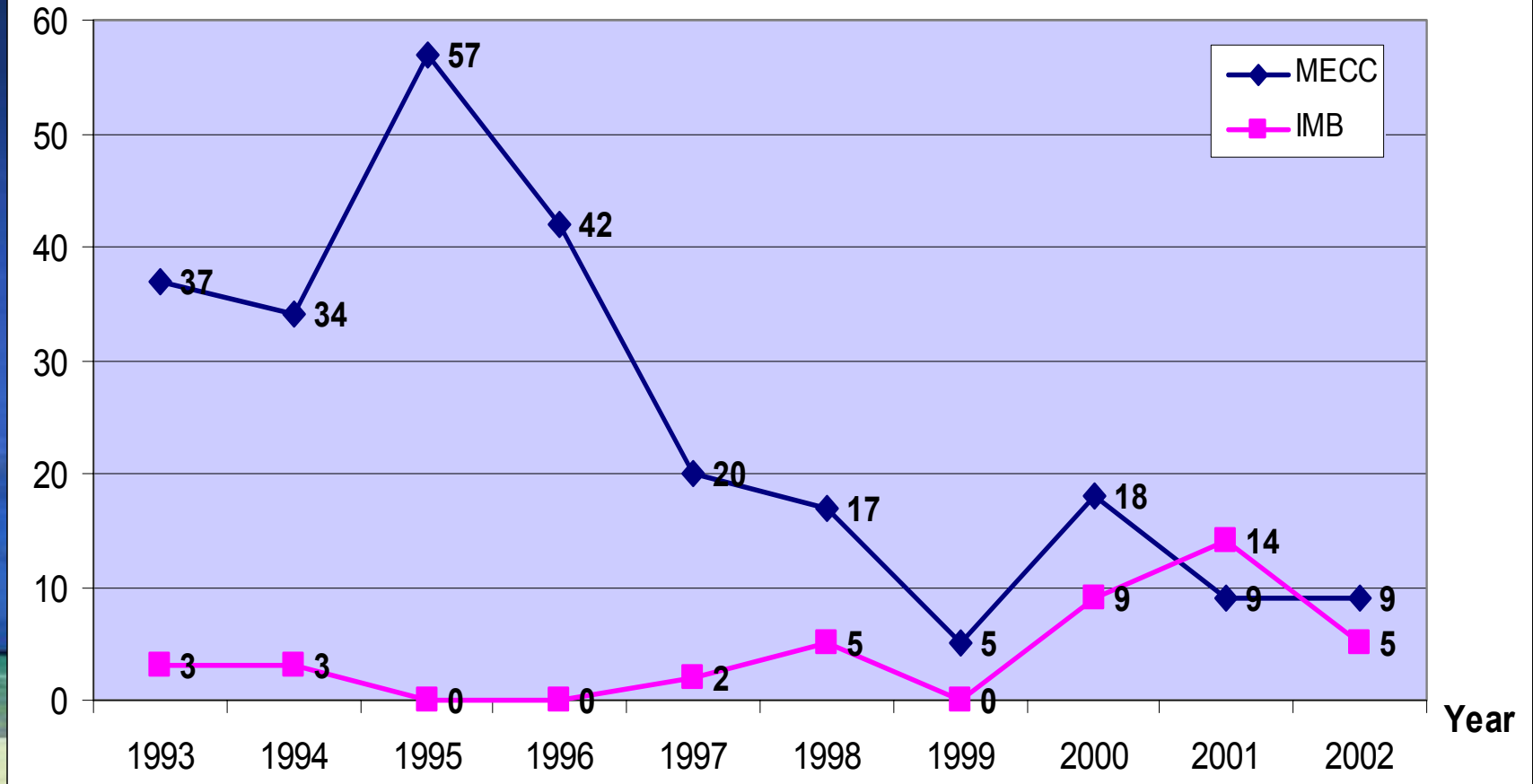


Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships, Annual Report (Various issues)

: Annual Report, Maritime Enforcement Co-ordination Centre, Lumut (various issue)

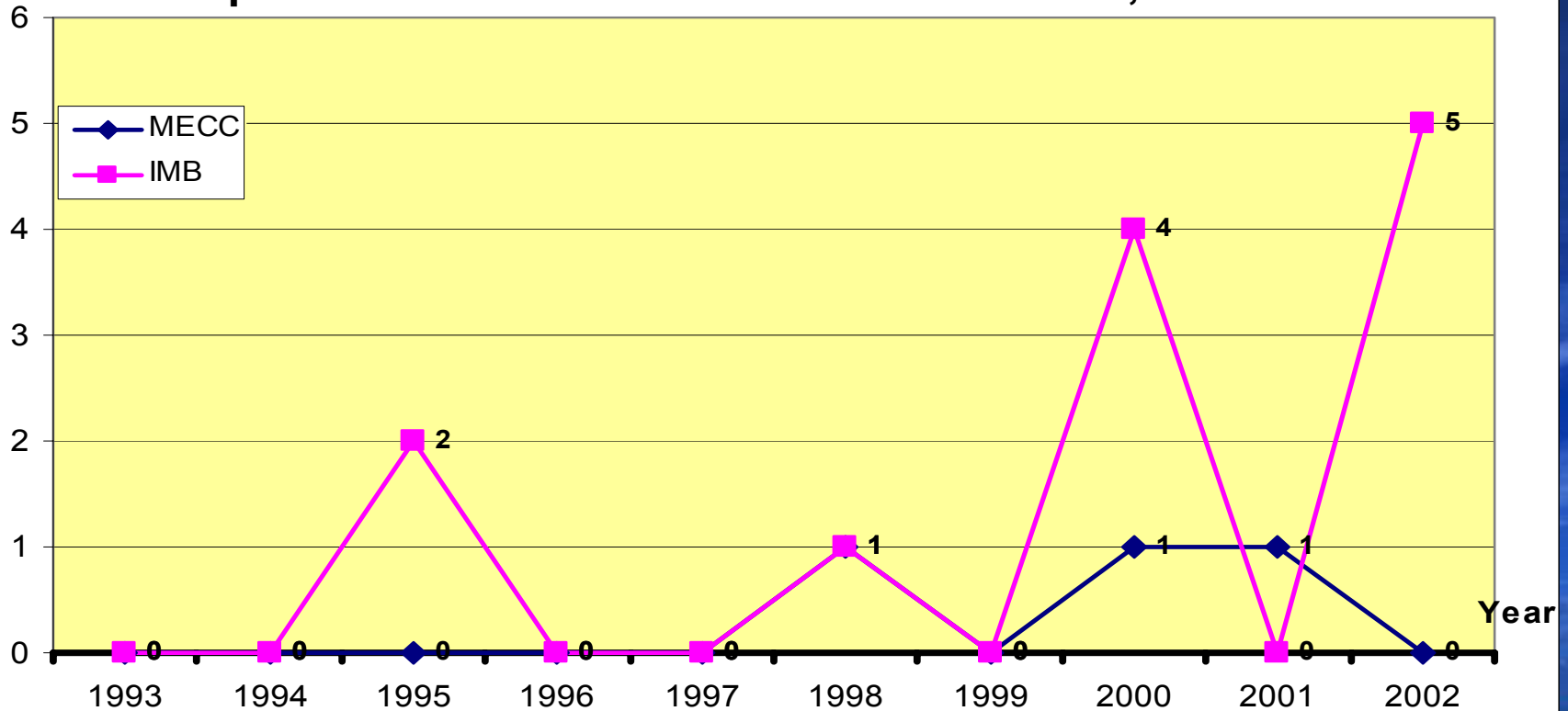


## Comparison of IMB and MECC Data: Sabah, 1993-2002



Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships*, Annual Report (Various issues)  
: Annual Report, Maritime Enforcement Co-ordination Centre, Lumut (various issue)

## Comparison of IMB and MECC Data: Sarawak, 1993-2002



Source: ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy & Armed Robbery Against Ships*, Annual Report (Various issues)  
: Annual Report, Maritime Enforcement Co-ordination Centre, Lumut (various issue)

**From the analysis derived from both MECC and IMB data, it is obvious that the extent and seriousness of sea robberies, especially in Malaysian waters, have somehow been blown out of proportion.**

A tropical beach scene with a blue sky, turquoise water, and a sandy shore. The text "THANK YOU !!!" is overlaid in the center.

THANK YOU !!!